

CHILDREN'S GAMES AND FOLK SONGS

I was interested to observe the games played by Brazilian boys and girls. In connection with my work in the school I had ample opportunity for such observation, and in addition my own children took part in the games and learned the songs, and were able to describe them to me minutely at home. I made no notes on the spot, however, and record them as my own and my childrens' memories have been able to conserve them.

Brazilian boys play with tops and marbles and kites, as boys do in other countries. I know of no native game that is really athletic. There may have been such in the past, but since the introduction of soccer football by the English many years ago that has become the national sport to the virtual exclusion of all other athletic games. That is, it was so; in recent years volley ball, ^{tennis,} and basketball have become increasingly popular. When you see a group of urchins playing in the street, they are almost sure to be kicking some sort of ball about. As they play no throwing games, they become more skillful with their feet than with their hands. I have often seen boys who ran to chase a tennis ball that had gone outside the court drop the ball and kick it in, rather than throw it in. They took over the name along with the game, and call it football, or rather futebol, for that is the modern way to write it. They make an extra syllable between the "foot" and the "ball", because they have difficulty in ending a syllable with a dental. While some Brazilian boys show a fine spirit of sportsmanship, in general they are not noted for being good losers, nor gracious winners. They like to crow over the fallen enemy. I remember a yell that some of them had one day when of two teams within the school, one had beaten the other four to nothing. The leader would call out the question, and the whole group bring out the answer; and then in the final part all would be together. It went: "Foi um?" "Não". "Foi dois?" "Não". "Foi tres?" "Não". "Foi quatro?" "Quatro, quatro, quatro a zero! Quatro, quatro, quatro a zero!" etc. (Was it one? No. Was it two? etc.)

One game that the boys used to play was called Acusado (accused). It was played by any number of boys. A rectangular figure was scratched on the bare ground with a

stick, the size varying according to the terrain and the number of players, but usually about fifteen feet by ten or thereabouts. Within this was another similar figure, leaving an alley about one foot wide, and within the second figure a third, and perhaps a fourth within the third. The players, with the exception of one who is "it", take their places in these narrow alleys, at will. When "it" places himself so as to look directly along any one alley, that alley must be cleared immediately, the boys either moving round the corner into an alley at right angles to the first, or jumping over the line into an alley inside or outside the first. If any boy does not get out of the alley in time, or if he steps on a line, the ever watchful "it" cries out "Acusado!", and the accused boy must run as quickly as possible to a preestablished base, about fifty or sixty feet away, while all his fellow players have the right to hit him, with open hand, as often as they can, until he reaches the base. He thereupon becomes "it", and the game continues. It gets pretty rough at times. In the school, the game would make its appearance each year, about the same time, and I tolerated it until a fight came up as a result of it, which was generally after three or four weeks. Then I would clap the lid on, and there was no more "Acusado" that year. But by that time the boys had had about as much as they wanted of that, and not unwillingly turned to something else. There was another form of the game called "Bota", because the figure, instead of being rectangular, was roughly in the shape of a boot; but otherwise it was the same.

The smaller children played a form of tag, called "Milú". That must be a local name, for it is not found in Figueiredo's dictionary. "It" is called the "milú". There is a base, called the manja. All the children are touching the base, and the milú says, "Milú, milú, quem não sair da manja é o milú". (Milu, milu, whoever doesn't leave the base is "it"). Thereupon the children all run, and the first tagged becomes the milú, and it begins all over again. I found this one interesting because they used counting out rhymes to determine who would be the milú the first time. Here is one of them:

Meu compadre, Manoel Fernandes
Deu ensino ao vosso filho,
Que passou por minha porta,
Arrastando a cabra morta,
Pelo pé, pelo pé,
Vosso filho é Gab-ri-é'.

(My colleague, Manoel Fernandes
Was tutor to your son,
Who passed by my door,
Dragging the dead goat,
By the foot, by the foot,
Your son's name is Gabriel.)

This rhyme is also used to play a game on the fingers, like "William Trimbletoe".

In colloquial speech, final "l" is often unpronounced, especially in proper names. Thus Manoel becomes "Mané". Hence the form of Gabriel, which is made to rhyme with "pé". Another counting out rhyme had questions and responses, as follows:

"Você tem uma bonequinha?"	"Tem".	"Have you a little doll?"	"Yes".
"Ela é engracadinha?"	"É".	"Is she real cute?"	"Yes".
"Quantos anos ela tem?"	"Cinco".	"How old is she?"	"Five".
C - I - N - C - O.		F - I - V - E.	

The child to whom the question falls in the counting answers it. The one on whom the last letter falls is counted out, and the rhyme is repeated until only one is left, who of course is "it". Instead of spelling, you may count to the number stated.

One of the commonest of the singing games is "Carangueijo" (crab). The players, who should be boys and girls in equal numbers, form a circle, boy, girl, boy, girl, etc. They march round and round while singing:

Carangueijo não é peixe,	(A crab is not a fish,
Carangueijo peixe é;	A crab is a fish;
Carangueijo só é peixe	A crab is only a fish
Na enchente da mare.	At high tide.)

Then while they sing the refrain, they carry out the actions indicated:

Bate pal ^a , palma, palma,	(Clap your hands, hands, hands,
Bate pé, pé, pé;	Pat your foot, foot, foot;
Roda dama, cavalheiro,	Swing your partners, gentlemen,
Carangueijo peixe é.	A crab is a fish.)

Following are other stanzas, but still others, equally meaningless, may be made up at will on the occasion:

Carangueijo não tem sapatos,	(A crab has no shoes,
Carangueijo sapatos tem;	A crab has shoes;
Carangueijo só tem sapatos	A crab only has shoes
Daqueles que você tem.	Like yours.)
Carangueijo não tem meias, etc.	(A crab has no socks, etc.)
Carangueijo não tem cabelos, etc.	(A crab has no hair, etc.)

"A Ponte da Aliança" (The bridge of alliance) is a game played by children, in which the actions of various persons are imitated to the accompaniment of the music.

La na ponte da aliança todo o mundo passa,	(On the bridge of alliance everybody
La na ponte da aliança todo o mundo passa,	On the bridge of alliance everybody
As lavadeiras fazem assim, As lavadeiras	(goes,
fazem assim,	The wash-women do like this,
Ai, ai, ai, ai, todo o mundo faz.	The wash-women do like this,
	Ai, ai, ai, ai, everybody does it.

At the words, "The wash-women do like this," the action of women washing clothes is imitated, and at the words, "Ai, ai, ai, ai," all clap hands. The game may be continued indefinitely by merely substituting shoemakers, carpenters, or any other class of workers, as it changes only one word in the song.

"Quando eu vim de Itororó" (When I came from Itororó) would seem to be dated from the battle of that name in the Paraguayan War in the middle of the last century. It may have been played before that, however, with a different name. Such things not infrequently occur in folk songs. The players form a circle, holding hands, one in the center to be Maria, or they may use the actual name of the person. They dance round and round while singing, until the word "madrugada", then stop and clap hands to the music to the word "sozinha", at which point Maria takes a partner from the circle and dances inside, while the others resume their dancing round and round to the end. At the end Maria returns to the circle, her partner takes her place inside, and the game continues.

Quando eu vim de Itororó, beber água não achei,
Encontrei bela menina, que de Itororó cheguei.
Aproveita, minha gente, que a noite não é nada,
Pois quem não dormir agora dormirá de madrugada.
Oh! Dona Maria, Dona Mariinha,
Ela está na roda, dansando sozinho.
Sozinha ela não dança, nem há de dansar,
Tira dama dessas, para ser seu par.

(When I came from Itororó, I had no water to drink,
I met a pretty little girl, when I got back from Itororó.
Now is the time, folks, for the night doesn't matter,
For whoever doesn't sleep now will sleep in the morning.
Oh! Miss Mary, Little Miss Mary,
She is in the circle, dancing alone.
She does not dance alone, nor will she dance alone,
Choose one of these girls to be your partner.)

There seem to be some inconsistencies in that, and I suspect that the text is corrupt; but that is the way our pupils played it.

The smaller girls are fond of playing Margarida. A margarida is a sort of daisy. The players form a close group around one in the center, who is the margarida, each one holding to the margarida's skirt. There is one player outside the group, who begins the game, singing, "Quero ver a margarida, etc." The group replies, "A margarida não se vê, etc." The one outside sings, "Vou tirando uma petala," at the same time taking the hand of one of the players surrounding the margarida, who leaves her

place, and joins the one outside. Then the group sings, "Uma pétala só não dá" (One petal is not enough), and the two outside sing "Vou tirando outra pétala" (I'll take off another petal), in the meantime detaching another girl, and so on, until the last one is taken away, and only the margarida herself remains. Then all join hands around her and sing, "Eis aí a margarida" (Here is the margarida), and that is the end of the game. What the three gentlemen had to do with it is a mystery to me.

Quero ver a margarida, Olê, olê, olá, Quero ver a margarida, Olê tres cavalheiros.	(I want to see the margarida, Olê, olê, olá, I want to see the margarida, Olê three gentlemen.)
A margarida não se vê, etc.	(The margarida can't be seen, etc.)
Vou tirando uma pétala, etc.	(I'll take off a petal, etc.)
Uma pétala só não dá, etc.	(One petal is not enough, etc.)
Vou tirando outra pétala, etc.	(I'll take off another petal, etc.)
Duas pétalas só não dá, etc.	(Two petals are not enough, etc.)
* * * * *	* * * * *
Eis aí a margarida, etc.	(Here is the margarida, etc.)

"La vem o dia" (The day is coming) is another ring game. All join hands and march round and round while the refrain, "La vem o dia" is sung. Then the marching stops, hands are released, and one person sings the verse, then they march again with the refrain. Additional and original verses are often made, as the rhyme is simple.

Refrain:

La vem o dia, o dia la vem, Entrei na roda, para ver meu bem.	(The day is coming, the day is coming, I went into the ring to see my love.)
Sete e sete são quatorze, Tres vezes sete vinte e um; Teu pai é ladrão de bode, Tua mãe de gerimum.	(Seven and seven are fourteen, Three times seven, twenty-one; Your father is a goat thief, Your mother a pumpkin thief.
Sete e sete são quatorze, Três vezes sete vinte e um; Tenho sete namorados, E nao caso com nenhum.	(Seven and seven are fourteen, Three times seven, twenty-one; I have seven sweethearts, And won't marry any of them.

To play "No meu jardim" (In my garden), the players form a ring, holding hands, but one player stays on the outside. They sing the first stanza, and on beginning the

second all raise their hands to permit the one outside to enter. He comes in and embraces the one he chooses, and then/ goes outside to start over, while the one formerly outside takes his place in the circle. Making faces is optional.

No meu jardim tem uma roseira,
No meu jardim tem uma roseira,
Que bota rosa no mês de Maio,
Que bota rosa no mês de Maio.

(In my garden there's a rosebush,
In my garden there's a rosebush,
That blooms in the month of May,
That blooms in the month of May.)

Entrai, entrai pela roseira,
Entrai, entrai pela roseira,
Fazei carêtas a quem não gostais,
Abraçareis quem gostais mais.

(Come in, come in by the rosebush,
Come in, come in by the rosebush,
Make faces at the one you don't like,
Embrace the one you like best.)

I know only that "O Demonio Tem Dois Chifres" (The devil has two horns) is played with the players lined up in two opposing lines. The details are lost to me.

Fui apanhar as violetas,
Girofrê, girofrê,
Fui apanhar as violetas,
La não encontrar.

(I went to pick the violets,
Girofre, girofra,
I went to pick the violets,
That's no place to be caught.)

O demônio tem dois chifres,
Girofrê, girofrê, etc.

(The devil has two horns, etc.)

~~Para que servem estes dois chifres?~~

Para que servem estes dois chifres? (For what are these two horns? etc.)
etc.

Servem para te furar, te furar,
te furar, etc.

(They're to stick you with, etc.)

A catchy little song is "Ai, ai, ai, minha machadinha". I am under the impression that it is a game, but I do not know how it is played. I am at a loss to know why he refers to his love as a little hatchet. Perhaps she was destined to grow up and become a battle axe!

Ai, ai, ai, minha machadinha,
Ai, ai, ai, minha machadinha,
Tenho coisa boa para tu seres minha,
Tenho coisa boa para tu seres minha,
Ai, ai, ai, minha machadinha,
Ai, ai, ai, minha machadinha.

Oh, Oh, Oh, my little hatchet,
Oh, Oh, Oh, my little hatchet,
I've a good plan to make you mine,
I've a good plan to make you mine,
Oh, Oh, Oh, my little hatchet,
Oh, Oh, Oh, my little hatchet.

One fault that North American mothers in Brazil find with nursemaids is that they invariably try to control the children by frightening them with stories of "bichos", witches, ogres, and goodness knows what else. "Tem bichos" (There are animals in there) is the commonest expression to dissuade children from going into undesirable places. The children soon catch on to the fact that the "bichos" are non existent, and perhaps

suffer no harm from being frightened; and after all, it is done with good intentions.

I daresay there is hardly a Brazilian in north Brazil who has not been sung to sleep with this little lullaby; and while it is of the nature of a threat, the music is so soothing that it seems impossible that it should frighten the most timid child:

Boi, boi, boi,
Boi de Piauí,
Vem pegar Joãozinho,
Pois ele não quer dormir.

(Ox, ox, ox,
Ox from Piauí,
Come and get Johnny,
He doesn't want to go to sleep.)

Boi, boi, boi,
Boi de Piauí,
Pode ir embora,
Que Joãozinho vai dormir.

(Ox, ox, ox,
Ox from Piauí,
You can go away now,
For Johnny is going to sleep.)

Or, as otherwise sung,

Não, não, não,
Não venha cá mais não,
Pois ele é bomzinho,
E ele vai dormir.

(No, no, no,
Don't come here any more,
For Johnny is a good little boy,
He's going to go to sleep.)